

***The Institution of Engineers, Australia: Sydney Division  
Engineering Heritage Committee***

***Oral History Program: Biographical Notes***

**James Drysdale McBEAN (1933 - )**

**Civil Engineer**

**Birth & Family:** Born 18<sup>th</sup> October 1933 in Melbourne. Moved to Sydney in 1939. Father was a Gallipoli survivor who also served in WWII, and settled down as a farmer with Scottish born mother in Urana. Brother Ian is large landowner in Northern Territory.

Married to wife Mary (physiotherapist) and had three children.

**Education:** Attended St. Andrews Preparatory School in Manly for two years then did the rest of primary schooling at St. Patrick's Church of England Primary School, Mosman. He attended Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) for secondary schooling. He was awarded a cadetship by the Forestry Commission to attend Sydney University. Failure in Chemistry and the desire to pursue part time studies led McBean to do the Civil Engineering Diploma Course at the Sydney Technical College.

**Qualifications:** Graduate, Sydney Technical College of NSW. (1958)

**Memberships:**

1963 - present	Member of The Institution of Engineers, Australia
	Elected Fellow in 1971
1968 - present	Member of Committee of Association of Consulting Engineers Australia
	Elected Life Member 1995
1966 - present	Member of The Association of Consulting Structural Engineers, NSW.
1989	Society of Professional Engineers of Papua New Guinea
1991-1995	The Construction Industry Development Council
1990-1992	The Australian Council of Building Design Professionals
1995	Professional Standards Council of .NSW

**Awards:**

**Work History:** His first position of employment was as a Trainee Engineer with Stanley Llewellyn & Whitten, Consulting Structural Engineers in 1953. While still a trainee and having a great aptitude for design, he engaged in structural design at the office of Rankine & Hill for two years before finishing his course. This grounding, plus association with Henry Llewellyn was invaluable for his later career. In 1956 he worked on Thornleigh Timber Yard as his first notable project. Major projects included schools and technical colleges for the NSW Government.

In 1965, at the age of 31 he became a partner at Stanley, Llewellyn & Whitten. A notable project was the Bank of Adelaide building in Sydney. The company specialised in structural design.

James McBean Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd was established in 1973 with much of the work generated by former clients of Stanley Llewellyn & Whitten. In the first year, the contract to build Concord High School was the first of many government contracts.

Merged with Colin Crisp to form McBean and Crisp in 1978. A large amount of work was done in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands for client Associated Mills. This included major silos, a new laboratory and rice mill in Honiara. Earthquake design was a requirement and New Zealand design had to be employed. Registration with the Society of Professional Engineers in P.N.G was a requirement to practise there.

McBean and Crisp were distinguished for heritage engineering. They developed a technique that involved injecting resin and reinforcing bars to preserve structural timbers. It was first used at Hyde Park Barracks Museum. Another notable achievement was the strengthening of the Sydney G.P.O Clock Tower against seismic loading. Other monitored projects include Rouse Hill House and Minto Barracks.

In 1994, McBean and Crisp Pty Ltd merged with Richmond and Ross Pty Ltd.

At the time of interview, James McBean continued his involvement in engineering, as principal of James McBean Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd

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Prepared by Michelle Keatinge, May 2003 from oral history interviews conducted on 09.04.1999.